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REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS TENTH SPECIAL SESSION

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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REPLIES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS

VENEZUELA

[Original: Spanish]

[11 March 1993]

1. Pursuant to paragraph (b) of decision 47/422, the Government of Venezuela takes pleasure in submitting some preliminary reflections on the report of the Secretary-General entitled "New dimensions of arms regulation and disarmament in the post-cold war era" (A/C.1/47/7).

2. Venezuela shares the Secretary-General's view that significant progress has been achieved in a number of important areas of disarmament and that new challenges as well as new opportunities for the pursuit of general and complete disarmament have arisen. These challenges and opportunities are all the more noteworthy because the new international environment enhances the possibilities for international cooperation and requires the international community to continue to attach the greatest importance to questions relating to disarmament. Venezuela therefore agrees that it is necessary to review the methods by which the international community will seek in the immediate future to create the optimum conditions for international peace and security.

3. From this point of view, the Secretary-General's report makes a timely and important contribution to achieving these goals by setting out a series of ideas and initiatives for dealing with disarmament questions in the immediate future and the methodology to be used in discussing them.

4. In Venezuela's opinion, the international community's disarmament efforts should build on the results already achieved and be directed, within a framework of continuity, towards exploring how agreements can be achieved expeditiously on the various issues which are already under consideration, giving emphasis to those which are generally agreed to be the most urgent in the new international environment. The international community should continue its consideration while constantly strengthening the basic machinery available to it for harmonizing positions and formalizing agreements.

5. Venezuela maintains that the adoption of arms limitation and reduction and disarmament measures continues to play an essential role in the strengthening of international peace and security. It considers that the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly - the first special session devoted to disarmament, which was held in 1978 - remains valid (resolution S-10/2). The need to end the arms race, in view of its serious implications for international security, was rightly accepted by all countries, even in the context of the so-called "cold war", as an imperative task requiring special study in order to determine its specific characteristics and those of the questions related to it as well as the appropriate machinery to deal with all aspects of disarmament issues. The results of those efforts proved the usefulness of continuing them. It is worth mentioning, in that connection, the consensus reached on various items within the framework of the Disarmament Commission and, more recently, the successful completion within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament of the Convention on Chemical Weapons.

6. With respect to the scope of the Secretary-General's report and based on the above considerations, Venezuela agrees with the Secretary-General that there are links "between disarmament and arms regulation on the one hand, and the political processes which shape international behaviour on the other". In particular, it agrees that "disarmament, the structuring of the new system of international relations and improving economic conditions" are mutually interdependent processes. Venezuela has maintained, in this context, that there is a close relationship between disarmament and development. The new international environment provides a historic opportunity to promote parallel advances in both these priority areas. In practical terms, the progress made in the area of disarmament could lead to a revision of the Programme of Action, adopted in 1987 at the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, in order to strengthen the link between the resources freed by disarmament and those related to social and economic development, taking into account the latest conceptual and programmatic advances in those areas, particularly that of sustained development, concerning which firm commitments and parameters for international action already exist. With regard to the link between disarmament and efforts to maintain and consolidate peace, we consider that the two processes have their own characteristics and specific machinery which cannot be united within a single programmatic framework or approach, even though they tend towards the same goals.

7. As regards the ideas relating to "globalization", Venezuela entirely agrees that disarmament efforts should not be confined to the bilateral sphere in spite of the great importance of that aspect, given the primary responsibility borne by the major military Powers in that area, but should be expanded and consolidated at the multilateral level, as regards both nuclear and conventional disarmament. Venezuela attaches great importance to the multilateral approach to disarmament because it considers that that approach embodies three basic principles: indivisibility, non-discrimination and broad reciprocity, which favour transparency and the universalization of effort. In particular, Venezuela attaches great importance to the efforts being made to establish zones free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction; to the efforts to prevent the extension of the arms race to outer space, which item remains on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament and concerning which several proposals have been submitted seeking to fill the gaps in the present regime governing activities in that area; and to achieving as quickly as possible a comprehensive ban on nuclear tests, the sole means by which nuclear weapons proliferation can be prohibited. In that respect, Venezuela agrees that there is "a system of agreements and treaties" which "provide a solid framework for furthering the disarmament and arms control process today" (A/C.1/47/7, para. 20).

8. The progressive approach by which the disarmament process must be completed does not, in practical terms, contradict the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and of immediate cessation of their qualitative improvement.

9. Venezuela believes it would be advisable to pursue the efforts to put an end to the cycle of development and production of nuclear weapons, including the testing stage, which continues in effect. It is necessary to take advantage of the progress achieved in some areas of disarmament in order to devote greater attention to this subject at the Conference on Disarmament and at the Amendment Conference to convert the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water of 1963 into a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban

treaty, whose efforts are a fundamental aspect of efforts to prevent the continuation of nuclear tests.

10. The existence of nuclear weapons, their possible increased sophistication and the continuing dangers of proliferation make it necessary to strengthen the international regime envisaged in the existing Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), on the basis of reciprocal, non-discriminatory principles and through balanced implementation world wide. If the Treaty is extended indefinitely and unconditionally, as suggested in the report, it may become so out of step with the de facto situation and the above-mentioned trends, that its validity in terms of its aims may be affected. Venezuela believes that extension of the Treaty should be aimed at achieving a compromise that will permit a strengthening of the Treaty and encourage other States to become parties thereto. Until such time as this goal is achieved, nuclear-weapon States must undertake to adopt effective and convincing guarantees aimed at preventing the use or threat of use of such weapons.

11. Venezuela is particularly concerned about the problems stemming from the application of scientific and technological advances to the development of new weapons and more sophisticated weapons systems and their consequent effects on international security, and also about the restrictions imposed on the transfer of dual-use technologies because of the effects they might have on proliferation. Both aspects deserved to be considered at greater length.

12. With regard to the problems relating to the transfer of armaments, Venezuela believes that these are not just regional in scope, although it does not rule out the possibility that they might be tackled at the regional level, provided that the regional bodies concerned are empowered to do so. In any event, it believes that further efforts should be made to identify the problem and to consider ways and means of resolving it without prejudice to legitimate needs for national security and defence and within a context of growing transparency, which is encouraged by the register of conventional weapons.

13. As regards institutional matters, Venezuela wishes to emphasize the importance that the work of the Disarmament Commission and the First Committee are acquiring in this new international context, since they are the organs entrusted with considering disarmament questions, including the interrelationship between those two mechanisms and the Conference on Disarmament. Venezuela considers that it is just as important to strengthen the capacities of the Organization in these spheres, particularly, the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

14. Without prejudice to the aforesaid considerations, Venezuela supports the Secretary-General's suggestion regarding an evaluation of existing United Nations disarmament mechanisms so that they may carry out their responsibilities effectively, bearing in mind the new challenges posed by the events that are taking place in the sphere of disarmament and international security. Venezuela considers the establishment within the framework of the United Nations of mechanisms to consider the problems created by the arms race in all its manifestations, including aspects related thereto, notwithstanding the conditions deriving from the confrontation of the super-Powers, to be one of the major achievements in this sphere. Due to this, the international community has a series of diverse instruments - political and technical - capable of dealing

with disarmament questions, the importance of which is particularly great in view of the unprecedented opportunities now opening for the disarmament process as a result of the international environment.

15. The United Nations system provides for mechanisms having specific characteristics and mandates to consider and negotiate matters relating to arms limitation and disarmament. The First Committee, the Disarmament Commission and, to some extent, the Office for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat are in a position to channel the Organization's efforts to that end, and to safeguard a comprehensive international approach to problems and to encourage solutions consistent with the dimensions of the subject.

16. In Venezuela's view, the First Committee of the General Assembly should continue to play its important role in respect of consideration of arms limitation and disarmament. In this new context, debates in the First Committee should satisfy a twofold objective: continue the review of priorities established in the Final Document of 1978 and contribute to the identification and promotion of broad principles regarding new subjects, thereby preserving its function as principal (guiding) deliberative body of the United Nations in the sphere of disarmament. This does not exclude the desirability of a rationalization that would guarantee adequate discussion of the matters submitted to it for consideration with a view to facilitating the adoption of specific measures in the spheres within its competence.

17. For its part, the United Nations Disarmament Commission should continue playing a fundamental role in this new phase of disarmament, particularly as new questions of importance to the international community arise which require detailed study before the negotiating stage is reached. The universal character of the Commission is therefore an important factor in the conceptual and more detailed discussion of these questions; the Commission could draw up more specific directives and recommendations on these questions as a basis for the subsequent establishment of international standards regulating the activities of States with regard to arms limitation and disarmament. Venezuela considers that the Commission has made constructive progress in this direction.

18. Venezuela stresses the need for the Conference on Disarmament to step up its efforts to find ways of strengthening its role as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. It is up to the Conference on Disarmament and its members to identify how best to achieve that objective; however, we believe that the Conference would benefit from a slight increase in membership. The Conference should not seek to monitor and supervise a few existing multilateral agreements on disarmament on a permanent basis, since that would detract from its main function as a negotiating body; it should serve, instead, as a mechanism for initiating negotiations as soon as possible in other areas of multilateral disarmament, with a view to securing world agreements on arms limitation and disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament has not made full use of the possibilities available to it in this area.

19. With regard to the supervision and monitoring of multilateral disarmament agreements, it would be preferable for each agreement to have its own monitoring body, as was agreed to in the case of the Convention on Chemical Weapons.

20. Venezuela considers that the best way of securing verification and monitoring systems, and thus of ending the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, is through specific multilateral agreements for each type of weapons open to all States. In our view, the technical characteristics of the disarmament process call for a specific and specialized approach. Transferring responsibility for verification and monitoring to political bodies could be counterproductive and work against the universality needed in order for a disarmament process to operate effectively.

21. Venezuela considers that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses a threat to international peace and security in general and that the best means of averting that threat definitively is to conclude specific multilateral disarmament agreements, which would be monitored and verified by their own specialized bodies, as has been done until now. Venezuela considers that the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations adequately cover situations of specific threats to international peace and security. If the above tasks are to be properly fulfilled, efforts to extend the range of international agreements and monitoring mechanisms available must be stepped up. If the international community wishes to make constructive use of the historic opportunity offered by the end of bipolar confrontation and to replace it with a stable system of international security, that priority task should not be delayed.